

MENTAL HEALTH STATISTICS

FACT SHEET

Prevalence of Mental Disorders in the Australian Population

Main results

- The National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing 2007 found that one in five (20%) Australian adults experience mental illness in any year. One in four of these people experience more than one mental disorder. ⁽¹⁾
- Based on these prevalence rates, over 3.2 million Australians had a mental disorder in the previous 12 months. ⁽¹⁾
- Results of the Survey indicate that:
 - one in seven (14.4%) Australians had an anxiety disorder;
 - one in twenty (6.2%) had an affective disorder; and
 - one in twenty (5.1%) had a substance use disorder in a 12 month period. ⁽¹⁾
- Almost half of the Australian population (45.5%) experience mental illness at some point in their lifetime. ⁽¹⁾

Table 1: Prevalence of mental disorders by sex in the previous 12 months.

		Males		Females		Persons
	%	Population estimate	%	Population estimate	%	Population estimate
Any affective disorder	5.3	420,100	7.1	575,800	6.2	995,900
Any anxiety disorder	10.8	860,700	17.9	1,442,300	14.4	2,303,000
Any substance use disorder	7.0	556,400	3.3	263,500	5.1	819,800
Any mental disorder	17.6	1,400,100	22.3	1,797,700	20.0	3,197,800

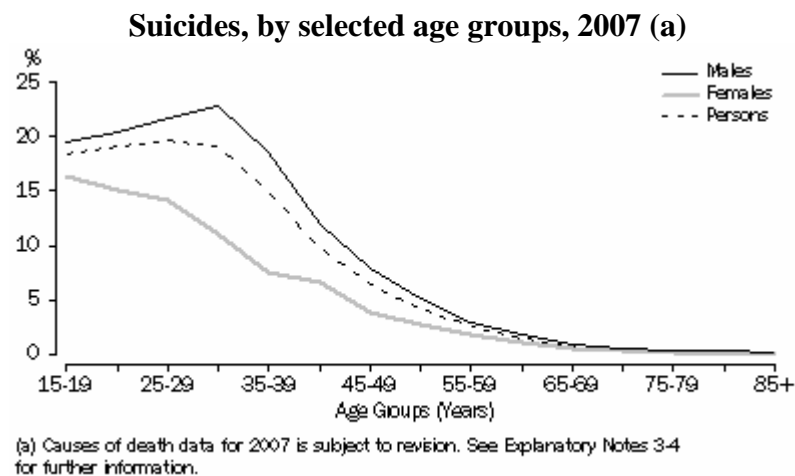
Source: ABS, National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results, 2007

Demographic characteristics

- Women were more likely than men to have experienced anxiety disorders (17.9% compared with 10.8%) and affective disorders (7.1% compared with 5.3%). On the other hand, men were more than twice as likely as women to have substance use disorders (7.0% compared with 3.3%). ⁽¹⁾
- The prevalence of mental illness decreased with age. The highest percentage of mental illness was reported for those aged 16 to 24 years (26.4%) and 25 to 34 years (24.8%). This is compared to 5.9% for those aged 75-85 years. ⁽¹⁾
- A number of other social factors are highly associated with having a mental disorder in the past 12 months including unemployment, prior homelessness and previous time in prison. ⁽¹⁾

Prevalence of suicide in the Australian population

- Intentional self-harm or suicide was ranked 15th of all deaths registered in Australia in 2007.⁽²⁾
- In 2007, there were 1,881 suicides registered representing an age standardised death rate of 9.0 deaths per 100,000 population.⁽²⁾
- The number of suicide deaths is slightly higher (by 82) than in 2006 and considerably lower than in 1998, when there were 18.2 deaths per 100,000 and the highest recorded number of suicides over the ten years that the report covers, with 2,683 suicide deaths registered.⁽²⁾
- Male suicides continue to outnumber female suicides, accounting for over three-quarters of all suicide deaths in 2007.⁽²⁾



Source : ABS, Causes of Death 2007

- Results of the National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing 2007 found 13.3% of Australians aged 16-85 years have experienced suicidal ideation, 4.0% have made a suicide plan, and 3.3% have attempted suicide at some point in their lives.⁽¹⁾

Service use in the Australian population

- Mental health care in Australia is provided by a combination of specialised public mental health services primarily managed by the states and territories, private sector services delivered by psychiatrists and hospitals, and primary health care services, represented principally by general practitioners.⁽³⁾
- The National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing 2007 found that 11.9% of the total population used health services for mental health problems in the previous 12 months.
 - Three-fifths (58.7%) of these people had a 12-month disorder; and
 - One-fifth (19.8%) had experienced a mental disorder in their lifetime, but had no symptoms in the previous 12 months.⁽¹⁾
- One in three (34.9%) people with a 12-month mental disorder used health services for mental health problems in the previous 12 months. This is equivalent to 1.1 million Australians seeking help for their mental health problems during this period.⁽¹⁾

- Hospital admissions were only a small part of the services used for mental health problems. Results of the Survey indicated that 2.6% of people with a 12-month mental disorder reported at least one hospital admission for a mental health problem in the previous 12 months. ⁽¹⁾
- General practitioners were the most commonly consulted group of health care professionals, followed by psychologists by people with 12-month mental disorders who used health services for mental health problems.
 - More than two-thirds (70.8%) consulted a general practitioner;
 - More than one-third (37.7%) consulted a psychologist; and
 - About one-fifth (22.7%) consulted a psychiatrist. ⁽¹⁾
- One-quarter (25.3%) of people with a 12-month mental disorder were taking medication for mental health problems. ⁽¹⁾

References

- (1). Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007). *National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results*. ABS Cat No. 4326.0. Canberra: ABS
- (2). Australian Bureau of Statistics (2009). *Causes of Death, Australia 2007*. ABS Cat No. 3303.0. Canberra: ABS.
- (3). Department of Health and Ageing (2007) *National Mental Health Report 2007: Summary of Twelve Years of Reform in Australia's Mental Health Services under the National Mental Health Strategy 1993-2005*. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.